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ABSTRACT

Direct approaches to attitude measurement make it easy for subjects to give socially desirable responses which may affect the outcome. A regression analysis method called policy capturing was used to study prejudicial attitudes in college students and to obtain estimates of the variance accounted for by predictors associated with sex. Students (N=110) rank-ordered 10 qualities for a professor. Results indicated that 21% of the females and 27% of the males exhibited prejudicial attitudes. Sex, or an interaction with sex, accounted for a wide range of the variance. The findings suggest that attitudes toward sex are more subtle than previously believed. The policy-capturing method can be used to detect the degree of prejudice in a sample when it is not detected by direct measurement, and can also be used individually as a diagnostic instrument. (JAC)

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USING THE POLICY-CAPTURING METHOD TO DETECT PREJUDICIAL ATTITUDES OF MEN AND WOMEN TOWARD MEN AND WOMEN

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Baltimore, MD, April 13-15, 1982.

1. Title of Paper: Using the policy-capturing method to detect prejudicial attitudes of men and women toward men and women.

2. Topical Session Preference: 1. Organizational-Industrial, 2. Social, 3. Information processing (cognitive process).

3. Problem:

Most methods used in measuring attitudes are considered to be direct approaches. That is, the subject is asked directly to answer questions concerning attitudes toward an object. The subject is aware not only that an attitude is being measured, but which attitude it is. Having this awareness makes it easy for the subject to give socially desirable responses. In order to avoid such responses and to obtain valid measures of the subjects' attitudes, it is necessary to use an indirect method that eliminates socially desirable responses because it is not apparent that an attitude is being measured and because the method itself precludes faking.

Previous research done by Madden & Martin (1979), Katz & Madden (1981) and Madden (1981), revealed that when a regression equation was computed for each subject, about twenty percent of the raters exhibited prejudicial attitudes regarding women after a direct approach did not indicate any prejudicial attitude. The purposes of this research are: (1) to study all possible combinations of prejudicial attitudes (i.e., sex of rater, sex of ratee and (2) to obtain estimates of the variance accounted for by predictors associated with sex.

4. Subjects:

Subjects were 109 male and 42 female college students from a technologically oriented, private university.

5. Procedure:

Subjects rank-ordered 10 qualities of a professor in terms of importance. The 5 qualities considered most important and used in this study were: communication skill, prepardedness, fairness, stimulation of interest and grading accuracy. Next, all possible combinations of the 5 predictors were generated in terms of an "H" for the presence of a quality and an "L" for its absence, resulting in 32 combinations. Each combination is a stimulation or profile of a professor. The profile with all blanks was eliminated, leaving 31 profiles. Each profile was then designated as male and again as female, making a total of 62 profiles. The 62 profiles were then randomly arranged on a form and presented to the subjects for rating. The ratings were based on a 9 point scale with "1" indicating a low degree of desirability with the simulated professor and "9" indicating a high degree of desirability. Examples of two profiles are given below:

	Profile #4	Profile #29
Communication Skill	L	H
Preparedness	H	L
Stimulation of Interest	L	L
Fairness	L	H
Grading Accuracy	L	H
Sex	F	M
Rating	3	7

6. Results:

A multiple regression equation was computed for each of the 151 subjects using the subject's ratings as the dependent variable and the 6 descriptive variables as well as the 5 interaction with sex variables as independent variables. The analysis involved 2 levels of raters and 2 levels of ratees.

Raters rated the profiles with a very high degree of linear consistency as shown by the distribution of R-squared in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Thirty-nine raters, or 25% of the sample, showed significant effects in terms of the predictor sex or an interaction of one of the other 5 independent variables with sex, entering their equations at the .05 level of significance.

The individual regression equations for each subject reveal that 21% of the female raters and 27% of the male raters exhibited prejudicial attitudes. As shown in Table 2, for 84% of these raters, up to 15% of the variance was accounted for by sex or an interaction

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Insert Table 2 here

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with sex. Fourteen percent of the female raters that exhibited prejudicial attitudes rated female professors lower than male professors, and 7% rated males lower than females. As shown in Table 3, 20% of the male raters that exhibited prejudicial attitudes rated male professors

lower than female professors, and 7% rated females lower than males.

Insert Table 3 here

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7. Implications and Conclusions

Individual regression equations indicated that 21% of the females and 27% of the males exhibited prejudicial attitudes. Sex or an interaction with sex accounted for a wide range of the variance, (see Table 1). It is interesting to note that for the 39 subjects exhibiting prejudicial attitudes, 8 were in the form of a main effect for sex and 31 were in the form of an interaction effect. Thus, prejudicial attitudes were operative not only for sex alone but when sex and another independent variable were paired. This finding suggests that attitudes toward sex are much more subtle than previously believed. The percent of variance accounted for varied from < .01 to .60. These findings confirmed previous results. An additional finding of interest is that women are more prejudiced against women than against men, and men are more prejudiced against men than against women. The sample size was too small to perform significance tests on the means. Future research is needed on larger samples to enable such a test.

The regression analysis method used in this study is called policy-capturing. It is a powerful method in that it can be used to detect the degree of prejudice in a sample when it is not detected by direct means of measurement. It has an additional strength in that it can be used on an individual basis as a diagnostic instrument.

8. References

Katz, E.J., & Madden, J.M. Using policy-capturing to measure prejudicial attitudes of women towards women. Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Eastern Psychological Association, 1981, New York, April 22-25.

Madden, J.M. Using policy-capturing to measure attitudes in organizational diagnosis. Personnel Psychology, 1981, 2, 341-350.

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Table 1. Number of Cases in 10-point Intervals of R-squared

R-squared	N (Females)	N (Males)	N (Total)
<5		1	1
60-69		1	1
70-79	1	4	5
80-89	6	15	21
>90	2	9	11
Totals	9	30	39

Table 2. Percentage of variance accounted for by sex or an interaction of sex with another variable.

Variance %	N (Females)	N (Males)	N (Total)
<1	1	4	5
1-5	7	13	20
6-10	2	9	11
11-15		2	2
16-20		2	2
21-25		2	2
26-30		1	1
56-60		1	1

Table 3. Percentage of male and female ratees rated lower by male and female ratees.

Sex of Rater	No. of Females Rated Lower	No. of Males Rated Lower
F	14%	7%
M	7%	20%